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ON THE PREVALENT AND INCREASING  
NEGLECT OF THE HOLY  
COMMUNION.

# A SERMON.

~~on the prevalence and increasing neglect of the Holy Communion.~~  
~~To which is added,~~  
*An Appendix, containing an Account of*  
~~the number of communicants at~~  
*At the Quarterly Sacraments, in the Parish Church of Sheffield,*  
*for the last twenty years.*

~~BY GEORGE SMITH, M. A.~~

~~CURATE OF THE SAID CHURCH, AND FORMERLY OF~~  
~~TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.~~

~~THE CATECHISM.~~

~~CATECHISM.~~

~~SHEFFIELD:~~

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[PRICK SIXPENCE.]

*Dr Parkinson -*

*- to the left*

TO the Congregations of the Parish Church  
of Sheffield, and of the Chapels of Atter-  
cliffe and Ecclesal, the following Discourse—

(Intended as a solemn and seasonable admonition of the friends of the Established Religion, to “hold fast the *profession* of their faith,” and to make an open avowal of their attachment to the Church of England, in these times of schism and infidelity, by a more frequent attendance on its principal ordinance)—

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

AND THE SUBJECT OF IT MOST EARNESTLY RE-  
COMMENDED TO THEIR VERY SERIOUS  
ATTENTION, BY THEIR

OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Broad Lane, near Sheffield, }  
March 1, 1800. }



# A SERMON,

Ec.

John, 6, 67.

"WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?"

WHILE, on the one hand, my brethren, the power of *habit* is acknowledged to be exceedingly great in all human concerns, materially influencing both our opinions and our practice, and inclining us to adhere to the same theories and customs in which we were educated, or in which we have long indulged; so, on the other hand, there is a peculiar charm attached to the single circumstance of *novelty*, independent of all other considerations, which is sometimes found to be even more powerful than the force of habit: so that it will lead men presently to renounce their old opinions, merely because they are old, and to change long established customs, for others which have no further recommendation, than that they are new, and different from the former.

It is, without doubt, wisely ordained, that mere novelty should have this great and agreeable influence on the mind of man, especially in the beginning of life: as it affords a vigorous and continual spur to the acquisition of knowledge, and to

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our progressive improvement of those rational and immortal faculties with which we are endowed.

BUT, if we indulge this love of novelty to excess, it may bring upon us serious inconveniences. It was given us, and is placed in the constitution of our nature, to counteract the force of habit, which is also another, opposite, but equally essential and constitutional law of our nature. The love of novelty, of variety and change, was given us, I say, to counteract the force of habit, to assist in weaning us from our prejudices, and to encourage us to "prove and examine all things, that we may hold fast that which is good." But if we begin to grow fond of things, opinions and practices, merely because they are new, without regard to their truth or value, so that we are ready at all times to let go that which is good, for any other that offers, we shall soon become "unstable as water, and cannot excel," we shall be "like children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," and shall be the continual slaves of doubt, caprice, and change.

THE fact is, my brethren, that doctrines and customs are neither to be received merely because they are new, nor to be rejected because they are old; but according to their real and intrinsic truth and value. There is always, indeed, a presumption in favour of doctrines which have been long received, and of customs which have been long established. And in matters of indifference, or of trifling moment, there is so decided an advantage in permanence and continuity, over variety and change, that these ought not to be lightly given up, without the most obvious and sure grounds of preference in those which are adopted in their stead.

WHEN our Saviour called upon the Jews to renounce the religion of their forefathers, and to embrace the doctrine, and to follow the example of his divine forerunner, of himself, and his disciples, he did not wish them to do it, but upon the clearest and fullest conviction of the truth of his pretensions, and of the superior worth and value of his doctrines and precepts. He invited them to "come and see;" to make use of their senses and understanding, and to judge, concerning his miracles and instructions, whether, or no, they were worthy of "a teacher sent from God." He did not blame them for the eager curiosity with which they flocked to the preaching of John the Baptist, in the wilderness, to which they had been induced by the novelty of his appearance, and the same of his austerity. But when, after having acknowledged him "as a prophet," and being "willing for a season, to walk in the clear light" of his doctrines and example, they afterwards, without any just cause, rejected the one, and forsook the other, he then reasoned with them on the absurdity of their conduct, and reproved them for their levity, fickleness, and love of change. "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind?" When any offered to become his disciples and followers of his person, he fairly told them the difficulties they would have to encounter, the hardships and dangers they must undergo, and gradually instructed them in the spiritual nature and design of his religion. But, having once acknowledged his authority, and engaged in his service, he is, if possible, still more explicit in assuring his disciples, that "he who has once laid his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven," and that "he only that endureth to the end shall be saved."

We have accounted, my brethren, for the alacrity and zeal with which many of the Jews at first received the doctrine of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ, and afterwards “ went back and walked no more with them,” from the single circumstance of that love of novelty, which is so natural and so powerful in the mind of man. But we must not forget to mention, that the spirituality of their doctrines, and the unpalatableness of their precepts, had a considerable share in producing the latter change we have specified. It were easy to prove this, (would the time permit) in the case of John, by an examination of the leading tenets of his preaching, both on points of faith and practice. And it is well known, that the great majority of those who became the first disciples of our blessed Lord, followed him from temporal views, expecting that this was Messiah the Prince, “ who should restore Israel,” redeem them from the Roman yoke, and establish them, as a nation, in great earthly power and prosperity. In this very chapter, our Saviour tells the Jews expressly, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” “ But,” says he, “ if you mean to be my disciples, you must not be solicitous about these things,—concerning any worldly advantages,—but you must let your attention be fixed on that food which is meant to be the nourishment of your souls, which the Son of Man shall give you, as his Father hath empowered him to do.” (a)

THERE then follows, from this passage to that of our text, a long conversation, or discourse, (one of the most sublime and beautiful in the whole

(a) See Gilpin in loc:

bible) which our blessed Lord, taking occasion from what had passed concerning the loaves and fishes, held with the Jews, and in which he compares, not only his doctrine and instructions, but himself, his own flesh and blood, which were to be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, to that manna, or bread from heaven, with which the Israelites were miraculously fed, in their progress through the wilderness ; shewing, at large, the superior worth and value of his gift above that which Moses, or rather God, had formerly bestowed on their ancestors. And it is this particular discourse which is said to have given so much offence to the Jews. “*From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*” “ Does this offend you also, ?” says our blessed Lord, “ knowing that his disciples murmured at it ? Will ye also go away ?”

It was here my original intention, my brethren, to have applied these general observations to the whole doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, which, being “ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” has, most assusedly, “ the words of eternal life;” (a) and to have suggested some reasons for believing, that the true causes why *many*, at least, “ go back and walk no more with us,” are, agreeable to the observations with which I set out, either an immoderate indulgence of the love of novelty, or the spirituality of the doctrines of our church, and the unpalatableness of her precepts.

WHILE some sectaries, with the ancient Romish church, maintain the intrinsic value and *merit* of good works, so that we may absolutely claim the

(a) The reply of St. Peter to the question in our text.

rewards of heaven for the performance of them ; while others maintain (as it is said) the sufficiency of faith without works, holding conversion to be the easy work of a moment ; while some preach up the irresistible grace of God, and the impossibility of the elect's falling from that state of grace to which they are predestinated ; while others assert that submission to the restraints of forms and ceremonies, even to the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, is needless and superfluous ; and others again make the whole of religion to consist in a superstitious observance of unimportant trifles ; others, in inward feelings and affections of love and rapture ;—is it surprising that many should be seduced by such tenets, so favourable to the pride, and indolence, and sensuality of man, and “ walk no more” with those who disallow these, and earnestly insist upon the directly opposite doctrines ?

THE consideration, however, of all these points would lead us into too wide a field for discourse. Remembering, therefore, the particular day (*a*) on which I now address you, and the immediate connexion of the passage of our text with the sublime mystery, that the body and blood of Christ is, indeed and in truth, the spiritual food of the Christian life, I shall confine myself, in the remainder of this discourse to this single particular.

JESUS CHRIST says, expressly and repeatedly, in the context, that he is “ the bread of life ;” not only on account of his doctrine, which nourishes the soul and fits it for eternal happiness, but also because he gave his life, as an atonement, a sacrifice for the life of the world. In this way, “ his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.”

(a) A sacrament day.

—“ Does this offend you ? ” Does this offend you, my Christian brethren ? “ Will ye also go away ” from the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, which he afterwards instituted, not only in remembrance of this spiritual grace, or favour, but, as it is expressed in the catechism of our church, “ as the means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof ? ” Will ye refuse to partake of those holy mysteries, by the worthy receiving of which, “ we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood, we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us ? ”—which words, in our communion service are borrowed, almost literally, from the discourse preceding our text. For, as our blessed Lord speaks in other places of being “ one with his disciples, as he and the Father are one,” so in 56th and 57th verses of this chapter, he says, “ he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

It must not, indeed, be pretended, that, in these words, our Saviour is speaking absolutely of the *sacrament*, which he had not then instituted. But he is speaking of that very doctrine—the doctrine of the atonement—of which the *sacrament* was afterwards appointed to be “ a perpetual memorial.” He is speaking of those benefits which he afterwards conferred upon the world, by the sacrifice of his death, of which “ spiritual grace,” favour, or benefit, the *sacrament* was afterwards appointed “ as the means whereby we should receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”

THE catechism, indeed, in another place, goes still further, and asserts that “ the body and blood

of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful, in the Lord's supper." By which it could not possibly be the intention of the compilers of our catechism, to countenance the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation: which was a principal ground of their dissent from the Romish church! By "the body and blood of Christ," both in the catechism and in this chapter of St. John's gospel, are only meant the *benefits* which accrued to the world by the sacrifice of the death of Christ: and by "eating his flesh and drinking his blood," we are to understand that act of faith by which we "receive," and assent to, the doctrine of his propitiation, and thereby apply and secure to ourselves the inestimable benefits resulting from it. (a) When our blessed Lord said of himself, that he was "the bread of life," and "the true bread from heaven," no one supposes that he was literally so. Neither can we suppose that the bread and wine which he held in his hands, after the last paschal supper, were really his flesh and blood. Yet he says expressly that "his flesh is meat indeed and that his blood is drink indeed." And again, "this is my body which is given, this is my blood which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins." So, after the consecration of the elements, we call them "the body and blood of Christ," and affirm that "they are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful, in the Lord's supper." But they still remain bread and wine. It is the act of repentance, faith, and thanksgiving in the receiver which converts them into an efficacious "sign of the thing signified":—which is—the "*grace*" of pardon and of eternal life, procured for all true

(a) Dr. Balguy's Seventh Charge.

penitents and believers by the death of Christ, by that ONE oblation of himself which he ONCE offered for the sins of the world. For, as it is expressed in the 29th article of our church, “the wicked, and they that be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet are they by no means partakers of Christ.” The only sense in which we can possibly understand that Jesus Christ was “the bread of life,” and that “his flesh and blood were meat and drink indeed”—and, consequently, the only way in which any can be “partakers of Christ,” is—by the benefits which he conferred on mankind by the sacrifice of his death. But then, in this sense, the faithful and devout, humble, penitent, and worthy communicant is, in the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, “*verily and indeed* a partaker thereof.” This ordinance is the appointed, the very means, whereby, on his part, he accepts, or receives the benefit of pardon and grace, of which this ordinance is, on the part of God, the instrument and seal, and a pledge to assure him thereof, and also of a future resurrection to eternal life and happiness, through the merits and power of a crucified and exalted Saviour. And his “soul is strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ” (a)—by his firm belief in, and acceptance of the efficacious sacrifice of his redeemer, exercised and expressed by this appointed ordinance, this act of faith and devotion—“as his body is by bread and wine.”

But I forget that the purport of this discourse is not so much to explain to you the nature of the holy sacrament, as to exhort you “not to with-

(a) Catechism.

draw yourselves from this divine and comfortable ordinance: not to refuse the spiritual food and substance provided for you in this heavenly feast." (a) You know, my brethren, how frequent and earnest our exhortations have been, especially of late, "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together; and so much the more as ye see *the day approaching.*" (b.) The peculiar circumstances of the present times have furnished us with many additional and powerful arguments for the importance and necessity of public, social worship. But does not the obligation, arising from these peculiar circumstances of the present times,—marked, as they decisively are, beyond the example of former ages, by the alarming prevalence and rapid increase of scepticism and avowed infidelity with respect to the truth and authority of the Christian religion, and of heresy and schism with respect to ecclesiastical polity, and church-government—apply with equal force to the dying command of our divine Master, "This do in remembrance of me," as to the apostolic injunction I have just quoted? Indeed that very injunction may fairly be supposed to include the latter duty also. For the primitive Christians seldom "assembled themselves together" for public worship and instruction, but they also joined in the celebration of the Eucharist.

CERTAINLY, my brethren, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was not only intended as a "means of grace" to Christians individually, in all succeeding ages, but as a standing memorial and evidence to those that are without, of the truth and power of our religion, to the end of time. "We do hereby shew forth the Lord's death, till he come."

(a) Liturgy. (b) Heb. 10. 25.

By accepting his gracious invitation “to eat and drink at his table,” it is, and was always understood, that we more clearly and decisively, than by any other badge, token, or ceremony whatever, professed our belief in the Christian revelation, and our assent to the authority of its heavenly Founder. In the same proportion, therefore, that unbelievers, and the enemies of Christianity, observe that *this ordinance*, in particular, is neglected and forsaken, they may justly, and will assuredly exult in the supposed increase of the number of those, who, if not unbelievers, or enemies of Christianity, are at least indifferent concerning its interests, to a degree which shews what little value they set upon it,—“that they are ashamed of Christ and of his words” and have not courage “to confess him before men;” than which nothing can be more injurious to any cause. And while many of the sects of our dissenting brethren consider (properly enough) an admission to the Lord’s table as the very term and bond of church-fellowship in their respective congregations, surely the members of the established church ought not to neglect, or lightly esteem “the communion of the body and blood of Christ,” according to their own appointed “form of administration,”—which is the principal ordinance of their church; by an attendance on which, above all others, they declare themselves members of that particular church; and which is the very bond of union “whereby they have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth them from all sin.”

It is, indeed, with the most heartfelt satisfaction that we see reason to believe, that our exhortations, and those of many more able advocates in the cause

of God and religion, throughout the kingdom of Great Britain, against the late daring and unparalleled machinations of infidels, of "evil men and seducers, who wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," have not been altogether without effect. The eyes of many of our countrymen have been, in some degree, opened: They have seen the danger, the irretrievable ruin that must ensue to the whole nation, were the restraints of conscience to be removed, and the great bulk of the people to be released from the obligations and power of religious motives and sanctions. They have, therefore, happily felt the necessity, even on principles of worldly policy and prudence, to lend their assistance to, and to countenance by their example, the efforts that have been made to enforce a due observance of the Lord's day, and an attendance on the public worship of God, to uphold the credit of Christianity, and to promote the doctrines and duties of religion in that community of which they are members, and which cannot "suffer, but all the members must also suffer with it."

But, my brethren, if your attendance on the house of God, or any other marks you may exhibit of zeal for the honour of God, and the prevalence of religion, proceed merely from worldly policy and prudence;—if you "follow Christ" only for the sake of present and worldly advantages;—will he, do you think, own you for his faithful disciples? By the application of that very test to which our Saviour resorted in this chapter, does it not plainly appear that many of you are not so in reality? You follow Christ, so far as to attend occasionally, perhaps pretty regularly, on the ordinary service of his church, but you will not follow him to his holy

table ! You will listen with patience, perhaps with pleasure, to the ordinary topics of his instruction, the duties of Christian morality, &c.—but if we speak to you of “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ;” the fall of man, and his redemption by the atonement of Christ ; the renewal of his nature by the Spirit of God, and the continual support of his spiritual life, by an union with him who “came down from heaven” and who is “the true bread of life ;”—and if we invite you, not only to believe these peculiar and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, but also to come and to be “partakers of those holy mysteries which he hath instituted and ordained,” not only “for the continual remembrance of his death,” but as the appointed “means of grace” and as “pledges of his love, to our great and endless comfort,”—how many of you are then “offended, go back, and will not walk with us” in this holy communion.

It would be difficult, perhaps, to determine the exact number of Christian worshippers, and their proportion to those who might reasonably be expected to be present on any given day, because we know not by what sufficient excuses, of mercy or necessity, many may be detained at home; and because our churches are numerous; and we must reckon as public worshippers, all those who habitually attend the public service of any congregation of Christians, of whatever sect or denomination. But of the number who are present, on any given day, in our own church, we can readily determine the relative proportion of those who remain behind, to receive the holy sacrament, which is certainly very small indeed, and, with grief I add, appears to be rapidly declining. (a)

(a) See the Appendix.

To such then as were wont, in former times, to be regular and punctual in their attendance on the Lord's table, at least on those days which are more peculiarly set apart for this holy ordinance, and on which a greater number of your ministers wait upon you, in the hope and expectation of a more crowded sanctuary and fuller communion;—to such, I say, of the more serious and well-disposed members of our church, as were wont, especially on these days, to be punctual in their attendance on the Lord's table, and yet now appear to be following the example of others, and to be, at least, relaxing in the frequency and zeal of this most important service,—Oh! how gladly could I enlarge on all the points I have already mentioned; how earnestly would I exhort them to meditate on these things, and to lay them seriously to heart!

Was it only from the love of *novelty*, that you were induced to come for a season to “the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ”? Or are you “offended” at the *purity* of that preparation which the doctrine of our church requires, “before you presume to eat of that bread, and to drink of that cup?” Or are you “offended” at the *unpalatableness* of the doctrine itself?—the doctrine of a crucified Saviour?—the doctrine of the atonement?—the doctrine “of salvation only through the merits of the sacrifice of the death of Christ?” Unpalatable, indeed, to human pride!—humiliating to human nature!—

BUT I must not enlarge. The time will not permit. And indeed, if the simplicity, beauty, affection and energy, of the single question in our text will not influence you, no illustration, or amplification of it, is likely to give it greater

force or additional effect. “**WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?**” Remember, in whose words we address you. “**WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?**”—No, my brethren! surely No! Permit me to answer, both in your name, and my own; Whatever others do, we will **NOT** “go away” from the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus: for we believe, that they are “the words of eternal life,” “the means of grace,” and of salvation. With Simon Peter, we believe, and are sure, that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God:” and that “there is no other name under heaven given amongst men,” as the same apostle elsewhere observes, “whereby we must be saved.” “Though all men should be offended,” therefore,—to adopt still further, the words of this same zealous disciple,—“yet will we never be offended.”

AND though the very repetition of these words of St Peter, which were echoed also by all the Apostles, cannot but remind us, how vain our boasting may be, if we have confidence in our own strength and security,—for “they all,” soon after, “forsook him and fled,”—yet let us remember, that the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, and all other Christian ordinances, are given to us, as “the means of grace;” to supply to us that very strength and assistance, whereof, from the frailty of our nature, we have such abundant need; and which will enable us to overcome all temptations, “to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,” and, in the service of our Redeemer, to be “fruitful in every good word and work.”

THAT we, my fellow-Christians, by the faithful use and improvement of these appointed

means, may thus attain their inestimable end and purpose, the purification of our hearts, the amendment of our lives, and the salvation of our souls, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



APPENDIX,  
CONTAINING  
AN ACCOUNT OF THE NUMBER OF  
*Communicants,*  
AT THE QUARTERLY SACRAMENTS,  
(INCLUDING THAT ON GOOD-FRIDAY)  
IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF SHEFFIELD,  
FOR THE LAST TWENTY YEARS.

	1780	1781	1782	1783	1784	Average of Five Years.
GOOD-FRIDAY	160	160	137	170	129	151 $\frac{1}{2}$
EASTER-DAY	180	190	229	190	138	185 $\frac{2}{3}$
WHIT-SUNDAY	140	138	130	175	102	137
MICHAELMAS	130	147	120	140	97	116 $\frac{4}{5}$
CHRISTMAS-DAY	900	290	210	196	161	219 $\frac{2}{3}$
TOTAL	910	865	826	871	627	819 $\frac{4}{5}$
DAILY AVERAGE	182	173	165 $\frac{1}{2}$	174 $\frac{1}{2}$	125 $\frac{2}{3}$	163 $\frac{2}{3}$ $\frac{4}{5}$

	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789	Average of Five Years.
GOOD-FRIDAY	122	216	196	140	180	$170\frac{4}{5}$
EASTER-DAY	129	253	254	228	221	217
WHIT-SUNDAY	110	150	153	156	120	$137\frac{4}{5}$
MICHAELMAS	103	120	160	120	150	$120\frac{3}{5}$
CHRISTMAS-DAY	164	236	215	227	180	$204\frac{2}{5}$
TOTAL	628	975	978	871	851	$860\frac{3}{5}$
DAILY AVERAGE	$125\frac{3}{5}$	195	$195\frac{3}{5}$	$174\frac{1}{5}$	$170\frac{1}{5}$	$172\frac{3}{5}$

	1790	1791	1792	1793	1794	Average of Five Years.
GOOD-FRIDAY	136	96	107	113	126	115 $\frac{3}{5}$
EASTER-DAY	174	163	179	136	140	158
WHIT-SUNDAY	101	78	94	89	75	87 $\frac{1}{2}$
MICHAELMAS	111	108	100	78	80	95 $\frac{1}{2}$
CHRISTMAS-DAY	150	132	184	142	113	144 $\frac{1}{2}$
TOTAL	672	582	657	558	534	600 $\frac{3}{5}$
DAILY AVERAGE	134 $\frac{2}{5}$	116 $\frac{1}{2}$	131 $\frac{1}{2}$	111 $\frac{3}{5}$	106 $\frac{4}{5}$	120 $\frac{3}{5}$

	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	Average of Five Years
GOOD-FRIDAY	119	120	110	124	115	$117\frac{3}{5}$
EASTER-DAY	142	100	96	123	105	$113\frac{1}{5}$
WHIT-SUNDAY	63	80	88	73	83	$77\frac{1}{5}$
MICHAELMAS	80	85	76	80	60	$76\frac{1}{5}$
CHRISTMAS-DAY	150	130	130	150	137	$139\frac{3}{5}$
TOTAL	554	515	500	550	500	$523\frac{4}{5}$
DAILY AVERAGE	$110\frac{4}{5}$	103	100	110	100	$104\frac{1}{2}\frac{9}{5}$

FROM the above account it appears, that though there was a trifling increase in the quarterly sacraments, of  $40\frac{4}{5}$  per ann. or of  $8\frac{4}{25}$  per day, on the average of the second five years above enumerated, the *decrease* in the following five years, viz: from 1790 to 1794 inclusive, was exactly 260 per ann. or 52 per day. From the year 1795 to 1799 there is a still further deficiency of  $76\frac{4}{5}$  per ann. or  $15\frac{9}{25}$  per day: so that the total decrease in the number of our communicants, taking the average of the last five years, and comparing it with that of 1785 to 1789 inclusive, (only ten years ago,) is no less than  $336\frac{4}{5}$  for each year, or  $67\frac{9}{25}$  for each quarter day!

THE respectable clergyman, to whose care in preserving a copy of the churchwardens' reports I am indebted for the greater part of the data on which the above calculations are founded, (and on whose accuracy I can perfectly rely) has mentioned the opening of St. James's Church in August, 1789, and the death of Mr Wesley in March 1791, as probable causes of the diminution of our sacraments since those periods.

I WISH I had reason to believe, that the number of communicants who have emigrated from the Parish church to that of St. James, bore any proportion to that which is wanting in our own congregation.

AND if the society of Methodists, contrary to

the repeated injunctions and uniform practice of their original founder, have really taken upon themselves to administer the holy sacrament in their own chapels and meeting houses ; I can only say, that we shall, in future, know how to appreciate their long-boasted attachment to the articles and principles of the Church of England, and must, however unwillingly, regard them as completely Separatists from the Established Religion. But, on the other hand, if so great a part of our sacramental congregations *was* really composed of persons in the Methodist connexion, how severe a reproof is this on the lukewarmness and inattention of those, who pride themselves on their belonging to no other communion, than that which they thus flagrantly neglect !

It may not be amiss, to take this opportunity of adding a few words respecting the non-attendance of the inhabitants of Attecliffe and Ecclesal, on the quarterly sacraments of the Parish Church.

So abhorrent are the discipline and practice of the Church of England from the encouragement of schism and division, that wherever, from the increase of population in any parish, or its great extent, it is found necessary or convenient to allow the erection of one or more chapels of ease, it not only provides that the ministers of those chapels be nominated by the rector or vicar of

that parish, but it is the general custom, (as at Leeds, Halifax, &c. in this neighbourhood) to shut up the chapels on the mornings of the great festivals of the church, in the hope and expectation that the congregations of those colonial chapels will come, at least so often in the year, to join in communion of worship with their brethren of the mother-church. This, as I well remember, was particularly contracted for, and specified, in the instrument, or parchment-deed, which was read, and executed by the Archbishop, on the consecration of Ecclesal Chapel, in the year 1789. And it is on this principle, that the chapelwardens of Attercliffe and Ecclesal, as representatives of the people, regularly attend the quarterly sacraments of the Parish Church of Sheffield, and receive a share of the money then collected for the poor:—which they do, most evidently, on the supposition that some of their respective congregations had been present to contribute.

I CANNOT enter, in this place, on an examination of the happy effects of “full churches and crowded sanctuaries” on these more peculiarly solemn occasions, (2 Kings, 23 ch. 22 v.) or of the wisdom and propriety of the practice above-mentioned, in promoting union and concord. What I have stated may serve as an answer to the objections which have been urged by some

of the principal inhabitants of the two chapelries within this parish, against the omission of divine service on these "high days," in their usual places of worship: and it may be proper to add, that the sacrament is administered in the Chapels, on the Sundays following the great Festivals, only for the accommodation of those to whom it might be inconvenient to attend the previous "general assembly" in the parish church.



FINIS

*Published by the same Author:*

1. A SERMON delivered in Aftercliffe Chapel, on Monday, February 28, 1794, being the day appointed for a GENERAL FAST. To which is annexed a Narrative of transactions relative to the disposal of the Vicarage of Rotherham. 8vo. One Shilling.

2. A SERMON delivered in the Parish Church of Sheffield to the ORIGINAL UNITED LODGE OF ODD FELLOWS. July 9, 1798. 8vo. Sixpence.

3. THE PAYMENT OF TRIBUTE A DUTY OF STRICT MORAL OBLIGATION A DISCOURSE, delivered in the Parish Church of Sheffield on the 30th of January, 1799. 8vo. Sixpence.

[†† The subject of the above Discourse was suggested by the recent Tax upon Income, which is to be continued.]

4. A SHORT PEAL ON THE NEW BELLS. 12mo. Price Threepence, or 2s. 6d. per dozen.

[N. B. The last-mentioned—hitherto anonymous—publication, of which a few dozens remain unsold,—has nothing to do, (as has been supposed,) with the technical art of ringing, but was principally designed as a seasonable CALL to the public worship of God. Part of it had previously appeared, under the signature of “ Leonard Lovechurch,” in the 10th Number of the “ Country Spectator,” a periodical paper, published in the years 1792-3, at Gainsborough, by the Rev. T. F Middleton, to which the author was a contributor of that, and only one other paper. And it was reprinted, with additions and alterations, on opening the peal of new bells in the parish-church of Sheffield, with the hope and intention of “ converting a temporary subject of popular concern into an occasion of promoting the eternal, and infinitely important cause of truth and religion.”]

